

## Even with tweaks, Realtors don't like tax disclosure bill

■ Critics continue to beat drum for another option for Silver Spring music hall

A bill designed to more accurately represent the property taxes that a homebuyer will pay on a house is working its way through the County Council, with support from the county executive but opposition from area real estate agents and brokers.

The bill, proposed by Coun-

cilman Philip M. Andrews, would require sellers or their agents to calculate and advertise the amount of property taxes that sellers will pay once the property is transferred.

The disclosure is necessary because the tax liability information presented on most advertisements is complicated by the state tax credit for existing homeowners, said Andrews (D-Dist. 3) of Gaithersburg.

Under a state tax credit, homeowners' tax liability is capped while they live in the house, but once the house is sold, the cap is removed and the buyer must pay taxes on the full assessed value of the home.

On Monday, Andrews added an amendment that relieved sellers or their agents from liability if the tax figures they produce are wrong, as long as they have used the method approved or recommended by the county.

County officials would be required to provide a step-by-step worksheet, available online, to walk sellers through the process. The county's Consumer Protection Office would enforce the disclosure requirement.

Even with Andrews' adjustments, Realtors are not satisfied.

"We still don't like it," said Meredith R. Weisel, lobbyist for the Greater Capital Area Association of Realtors. "What he did makes it a little better but still won't solve the problem."

Information in closing documents now warns homebuyers that their taxes will increase, Weisel said.

"Our big thing is why the seller or the seller's agent has to be the one to calculate the increase. This type of disclosure is different than other information that the seller knows a little better," she said. "With taxes, a seller knows

what they currently pay, not what a buyer will pay."

Andrews' bill has the blessing of County Executive Ishi Leggett (D), who calls it a "landmark consumer protection bill."

The council is scheduled to vote on the bill next week. If approved, a council committee has recommended the bill take effect April 1.

### Council News

JANEL DAVIS

### Music hall debate

The ongoing saga surrounding the Silver Spring music venue continued this week with Howard County Executive Ken Ulman (D) lobbying for Bethesda's IMP Productions.

In a letter sent to Leggett on Monday (read it at [www.gazette.net/links](http://www.gazette.net/links)) Ulman urged Leggett to consider IMP's counter offer to operate the music hall being developed on Colesville Road in Silver Spring. IMP owner Seth Hurwitz's commitment to operating the Merriweather Post Pavilion in Columbia since 2004 would carry over into Silver Spring and make him "an invaluable asset to this project," Ulman writes.

IMP spokeswoman Andree Schaefer said the company was not aware Ulman was sending the letter. "We remain hopeful that logic will prevail and that the administration will take a long, hard look at this," she said.

In September, Leggett signed a non-binding letter of intent with Live Nation, a Los Angeles concert promoter and music hall operator, to open a Fillmore club in Silver Spring. Leggett has maintained that he will not consider other proposals while the county is negotiating with Live Nation.

Last month, IMP proposed a plan that Hurwitz — who also owns the 9:30 Club in Washington — called a much better deal for the county.

Some community groups and council members have argued for a more open process in the negotiations and for consideration of IMP's proposal.

"I think there will be lots of questions about the deal to emerge at the Planning Board, before the council and within the state legislature," said Councilman George L. Leventhal (D-Arling) of Takoma Park, who has met with Leggett and Hurwitz.

"I'm trying to sound the signal that the administration will have to have a better answer than



Andrews

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## COUNTY

'We're through,' because we're not through."

### Praisner still hospitalized

Council President Marilyn J. Praisner was expected to move from the intensive care unit at Suburban Hospital in Bethesda early this week, but she remains hospitalized as doctors try to determine what caused two car crashes she was in minutes apart on Nov. 16.

Praisner (D-Dist. 4) of Calver-



Praisner

ton will miss the last two County Council sessions of the year, said council spokesman Neil Greenberger, and will not return until after the next year.

Praisner has been in intensive care since sustaining a collapsed lung and bruises after her car left the road, hit a tree and turned on its side in the Burtonsville area. Minutes earlier, she was involved in a minor collision with another car in the same area.

### Coming next

- Leggett hosts a town hall meeting at 7:30 p.m. Friday in Argyle Middle School at 2400 Bel Pre Road in Silver Spring. Call 240-777-6530.

- The County Council will elect its new officers at 9:30 a.m. Tuesday in the Council Office Building at 100 Maryland Ave. in Rockville. Call 240-777-7900.